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Agency Secretary

# NEWS RELEASE

## California Regional Water Quality Control Board Central Valley Region

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### STATEMENT BY DR. KARL LONGLEY REGARDING SALINITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT

This Regional Board, with the cooperation of the State Board, is beginning the process of developing a new policy for regulation of salinity in the Central Valley. The purpose of a new policy for regulation of salinity in the Central Valley is to assure a sustainable surface and ground water supply for all users of Central Valley water, both within the Region and throughout much of the State. The successful development of this policy more than likely will require the extensive revision of the two Central Valley basin plans and the Bay-Delta plan. An expected, important outcome of this effort would be the development and implementation of a salt management plan.

This effort will not be easy. The necessary updating of the basin plans to address salinity issues will be an expensive and lengthy process with the source of funding for this effort being unknown at this time. Design, construction and operation of infrastructure necessary to control salinity also will be expensive. This effort will require the work of many agencies and interests, and that work will take a very long time, conceivably many decades for full implementation. Failure to control salinity, however, will result in continued decline of Central Valley water quality at an enormous cost to all water users, eventually creating even greater hardship for the environment, agriculture, industry, municipal utilities, and the entire economy of the Valley and the State. A very conceivable result if we are not successful in this effort is the stagnation and/or decline of the Valley economy with loss of jobs and opportunity for many, many Valley residents.

Recognizing that the outcome of a final policy may result in changes to the current regulatory approach, many parties affected by the Board's current approach to control salinity have already requested Board staff to delay any action until the "new" policy is developed and, as a Board member, this is a concern to me and should be to this Board. We are at the infancy stages of policy development and while we all recognize the importance of this policy, we are still too early in the process to be certain it will proceed forward. Therefore, we need to continue to exercise our authority to regulate discharges of salt to minimize salinity increases within the Central Valley. We cannot solve the salinity problem just by controlling discharges, and we must be reasonable in prescribing salinity standards and compliance schedules. However, if we do not continue to control saline discharges, water quality will continue to rapidly degrade and the magnitude of the problem to be mitigated will be much greater. The process of developing new salinity control policies does not, therefore, mean that we should stop regulating salt discharges until a salinity Policy is developed. In the meantime, the Board should consider all possible interim approaches to continue controlling and regulating salts in a reasonable manner, and encourage all stakeholder groups that may be affected by the Regional Board's policy to actively participate in policy development.

I believe this undertaking to be a very arduous but necessary undertaking by this Board if we are to ensure that the Central Valley in the future enjoys the quality of its waters necessary to ensure a healthy environment and a good quality of life for its residents.

*[Delivered at the regular public meeting of the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board]*